

We are Palestinians just for a political objective

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March 31, 1977 (translation from the original Dutch article).

Note of Likud Holland: still fascinating article in which a Palestinian leader admits that the notion of a 'Palestinian people' is only an invention to harm Israel.

"He is our leader. Many thousands, just like me, believe in him." This is said by one of the 5 lifeguards of Zuhair Mohsen, leader of the pro-Syrian Palestine guerilla organisation, Al Saika.

Mohsen, who also heads the military operations branch of the Palestine Liberations Organisation, the PLO, and is also a member of the executive committee of the PLO was in Cairo for a meeting of the Palestine National Council. In spite of the trust his followers put in him and his important position inside the movement (if I don't urge people to make a decision, they won't) he may not have been totally at ease in Cairo. He was not very cordially treated by his Palestine friends during the council meetings in Cairo.

Mohsen and his Palestinian guerilla fighters belong politically to the governing Baath party in Syria. Within the PLO he protects Syrian interests. Many, within the Palestinian resistance, did not forget the events that took place during the Lebanese civil war when Syrian forces turned against the alliance of the Palestinians with the Lebanese left. There occurred several clashes between Al Saika and the largest Palestinian guerilla organisation, Al Fatah. During that civil war there were repeated rumours that the Damascus regime wished to see PLO leader Jassir Arafat replaced by Mohsen.

Aversion

In spite of the apparent unity at that Palestine congress between Saika and most other Palestinian groups, many Palestinian leaders did not bother to hide their aversion to Al Saika. A clear sign of strained internal relations appeared when, immediately after the murder of left Lebanese leader Kamal Jumblatt, the Fatah representative in Cairo, Rihbi Awad, shouted that *"the murderers are between us"* while pointing in the direction of Mohsen and his followers.

The causes of the differences of opinion within the Palestinian movement have deeper roots than the war in Lebanon. In the whole concept of Arab nationalism, Ba'athist style, Mohsen stands in fact closer to the supporters of the no concession idea, a group, as described by himself, of romantics and fascists, rather than to the ideological program of the Fatah group.

"We believe that first of all the Palestinians should cooperate with Syria and only then with other Arab nations. Only Syria can play an effective role in the conflict against Israel. We can not operate out of Egypt. Syria is for the Palestinians the most important base, since the beginning of the struggle against the Zionist invaders in 1918."

Not a people

Mohsen's attitude is not so amazing. By listening to his political and ideological views one can not suppress the feeling that perhaps much less has changed in the Arabic world then previously thought. According to Mohsen there is no such thing as a distinct palestinian people.

"There is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. We are part of nation, the Arab people. I myself have relatives with Palestinian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Syria citizenship. We are one people. Just for political reasons we endorse our Palestinian identity. This is because it is in the national Arab interest to stimulate the existence of Palestinians as opposed to zionism. Yes, the creation of a distinct Palestinian identity had only tactical reasons. The creation of a Palestinian state is a new means to continue the fight for Arab unity and against Israel."

The logic of Mohsen is actually quite simple: *"Because Golda Meir states that there is no such thing as a Palestinian people, I say that there is a Palestinian people, different from Jordan."*

Strategy

Also, Mohsen's strategy is quite simple: A separate Palestinian entity should protect the national interests inside the then remaining occupied territories. The Jordanian government can not speak in name of the Palestinians in Israel, Lebanon or Syria. Jordan is a country with defined borders. It can not, for instance, make a claim on Haifa or Jaffa, while I have rights on Haifa, Jaffa, Jerusalem and Beer Sheva. Jordan has jurisdiction only over Jordanians and Palestinians living in Jordan.

A Palestinian state would be entitled to represent all Palestinians in the Arab world and elsewhere. Once we obtain all our rights in all of Palestine, we should not delay for one moment the unification of Jordan and Palestine.

Agreement

Mohsen's analysis of the function of the existence of a palestinian people, is not the only political tie in he has with the official Israeli position. One of the Israeli arguments, to hang on to the in 1967 occupied territories, is the concept of secure and defensible borders.

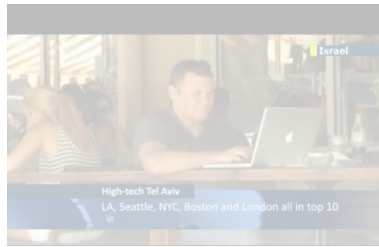
In spite of the fact that the Arab countries, in their mediafight against Israel, consistently brush aside this concept, it was in fact the idea of secure borders that lay at the bottom of Mohsen's defence of Syrian intervention in the Lebanese civil war. *"The Syrians only intervened in Lebanon to stop the hostilities. That was the only purpose of Syria and it succeeded in being accepted as an honest broker by al Lebanese parties. Syria was of the opinion that a renewed war in Lebanon would endanger Syrian security"*.

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